Simple Strategies for EQ-i Development

To begin, select two or three subscales on which to concentrate your efforts. You might select areas you feel you need to increase, or you might choose to work on other skills that seem particularly important to your job success.

IntrRApersonal Strategies

Self-Regard

● Conduct a Self-Regard inventory with regards to your job performance. Write a list of your strengths and areas that need developing. Once you have pinpointed your areas of strength, fully leverage these areas in various job-related situations. Make sure to use these skills consistently, not just with a certain group or in a particular setting.

● People work best when they create personal goals for accomplishment. Individuals need to be able to recognize when their accomplishments at work (i.e., both individually and collectively) have been met. Achieving success or meeting one's goals are a prime determinant of feeling good about oneself at work.

● Set individual and team goals that are challenging yet readily attainable. Make your goals specific, measurable, and action-oriented. If your goals are not being met, break them down into smaller steps and create mini-goals. This will help to determine which areas need greater scrutiny.

● Ensure that your goals are reviewed on a frequent basis, and communicate to supervisors and managers the importance of setting aside time to do this thoroughly. Use these reviews as opportunities to celebrate success, and to intervene early when goals are not being met.

● Seek feedback on your performance from your supervisor on a regular basis. Let him/her know what you are trying to work on. This way, your supervisor will know how to comment on your progress, as well as to supply you with resources to improve your performance.

Emotion Self-Awareness

● In order to deal with work conflict effectively, you must be aware of stimuli that result in negative emotional triggers. Before the emotion occurs, write down a list of skills you have at your disposal that could be used to decrease the negative emotion. For example, if you are feeling anger towards a coworker, use your Empathy, Problem Solving, and Reality Testing skills to mitigate the issue.

● What impact do emotions have on your decision making? Do you have a tendency to make decisions impulsively when under stress? When making decisions, try to understand how emotions could be biasing your decision-making process. Don't be afraid to ask yourself, "What am I feeling and why?" If negative emotions are decreasing your ability to make effective decisions, remember to ask for input from relevant people before making the final decision.

● Get into a habit of asking others at work how they are feeling about certain situations. Ask others regularly, "How they feel about a decision?" or "How they feel about the team's ability to communicate and share ideas?"

● Improving your ability to describe and understand emotions will help you to focus on strategies to overcome obstacles. Feeling anxious or angry are two different emotions and should be treated differently. Write a list of emotions that you feel you need to use at work on a regular basis. Find these emotional words in the dictionary and read up on their definitions.

- Make a point of watching other people's emotional reactions during intense interactions. As well, listen to words others use that may have emotional content to it. This will allow you to perceive and understand other people's emotional information more accurately.

Assertiveness

- Conduct an Assertiveness inventory with regard to your job performance. Write down situations when you felt you asserted yourself effectively and situations when you felt like you took either a more passive stand or an overly aggressive position. Once you have written down the various situations, look to see if any patterns emerge. Try to understand how and why your behaviors differ in various situations and with different groups.

- Accepting and expressing all types of emotions are critical for job success - not just happiness and joy but also anger and anxiety. Typically, in a business environment people tend to be more reserved because they confuse emotional expression with being unprofessional. From an EQ standpoint, individuals need to communicate all emotions appropriately, even if it is emotionally difficult to do or if one has something to lose by doing so.

- Some people have trouble being assertive in face-to-face communications at work. In order to improve in this area, prepare notes beforehand so that you can share ideas in an organized and effective manner. Remember to study your notes before the interaction occurs to become more familiar with the information you want to convey.

- If you are experiencing trouble asserting yourself in certain situations, try visualizing yourself performing the skill to perfection. Picture yourself successfully asserting your opinions with colleagues and clients, while at the same time enjoying the moment of the interaction.

- Be conscious of your body language, tone of voice, and emotional language when delivering your message. These characteristics may skew the message that you are trying to put forth. They may turn a neutral circumstance into one that is blended with aggression or passivity.

- Practice appropriate assertiveness skills in environments outside of your job (e.g., with friends or family). Get informal feedback about your assertiveness skills from others and apply this information to situations that may require you to be more assertive at work.

Independence

- When taking on new or unfamiliar projects there may be times when you feel insecure in your ability. Remember to fully leverage your EQ strengths until you have learned the technical skills necessary to excel in the new role.

- Break down activities into smaller parts; it may be that help is necessary for only one small part rather than the whole task.

- Ask your manager or supervisor how you can acquire new knowledge that will improve your skill set. Ask what resources are available at your organization to further your development (e.g., workshops, webinars, coaching/support).

- Conducting a SWOT analysis towards your job challenges may help to improve your independence. Identify a situation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats will help to recognize internal and external supports (strengths and opportunities) as well as internal and external challenges (weaknesses and threats).

- When making decisions, take into account a large number of potentially contradictory factors and bits of information. Seek and accept the participation of others when appropriate, and do not get overly burdened by the effect of your decisions on others.

- Seek feedback on your performance from a few trusted colleagues on a regular basis. Let them know that you are working on becoming more independent. This way they will know how to comment on your progress. It will also enable you to monitor your development and to deliberate which actions will help you to improve your performance in this area.

Self-Actualization

- Write a list of your strengths. Once you have pinpointed those areas, identify how they contribute to your organization's performance and success.

- Find out how your strengths can be leveraged in other areas within your organization. This is a way for you to learn new skills, as well as enabling you to take further advantage of your potential.

- Determine your short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals, both within and beyond the organization. Set goals that are specific, realistic, measurable, and attainable. It is important to have a good idea of what you want to achieve in the present, as well as in the future.

- Once you have a clear idea of the direction in which you want to head in your career, be sure to monitor your progress in achieving those self-development goals over time. This will reduce the likelihood of procrastination.

- Take some time to explore the reasons why you like your job and the field that you are in. Write down the areas that are motivating to you (i.e., the things you most like to do) and keep them nearby. Review your list at least once a week. This will serve as a reminder to you.

- Make sure that your job expectations are closely aligned with the nature of your job. Role ambiguity may cause you to lose excitement and meaning in your work.

- Maintain focus and enthusiasm for your work by joining a periodic consultation group or professional association. These groups will provide a supportive network for you to connect, communicate, and share ideas. This will enable you to learn new perspectives, as well increasing passion for your work.

IntERpersonal Strategies

Empathy

- One of the keys to empathy is active listening. Often when people talk to each other they do not listen attentively and are often distracted or thinking about something else. As an active listener, you should be able to repeat back in your own words what you think the speaker has said. This does not mean that you agree with him/her, but rather that you understand what he/she is saying.

- Use on the job interactions as opportunities to practice your empathy skills. In order to improve this skill at work, remember to listen attentively, send clear signals, and convey openness and cooperation.

- To better understand the feelings of others, try to learn more about them personally. Take time to find out who they are as individuals before finding out what activities they perform at work. Understanding others is a key step to appropriate empathy.

- Genuinely listen to others without any distractions. Listen to the emotional content in the words they use. Also, pay close attention to cues such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body posture.

- Practice your empathy skills in less threatening environments (e.g., with friends or family). Get informal feedback and apply this information to situations that require you to work in a group environment.

- Seek feedback on your performance from a few trusted colleagues on a regular basis. Let them know that you are working on improving your empathy skills, this way they will know how to comment on your progress. It will also enable you to monitor your development and to determine which actions will help you to improve your performance in this area.

Social Responsibility

- Are you proud to be part of your team or do you find yourself privately criticizing them? If you are not satisfied with your team, discuss with the team leader how to better align and integrate your skills within the team's functioning.

- Make sure that your job expectations are closely aligned with your role on the team. Role ambiguity may cause you to lose excitement and meaning in your work.

- Examine whether your individual goals are aligned with your team and organizational goals. If there are goals that are not aligned, look at how you can modify them to contribute positively to the larger goals.

- Find out how you can impact your community. Contribute positively to your community (e.g., charities or non-profit organizations) by volunteering your time. When doing this, ask about the guiding principles or mission statement for that community organization, and find out how they use social responsibility in their everyday functioning.

- Find someone who you believe is a great team leader. Talk to this person about his or her leadership experiences and observe him or her in group situations.

- Solicit feedback from trusted coworkers and ask them how often you support the rules and values of the organization. If they report that this is an area you need to improve, ask them how it has interfered with your performance, as well as your team's performance.

Interpersonal Relationship

- Spend time with co-workers outside of the office. Whether you have a team lunch or you socialize after work hours (e.g., corporate fundraisers, corporate relays, or corporate health initiatives), it is important to see people outside of their work roles, while maintaining boundaries and being mindful of dual-relationships.

- Share some aspects of your life with others in the workplace. It is not necessary to reveal intimate details; rather, you can discuss some activities that occupy your personal time. By doing so, you will find common ground with others related to activities outside of work.

- Remember to celebrate events that are important to your coworkers. This may include birthdays, anniversaries, promotions, or recognition for a job well done. A little acknowledgment goes a long way to augment a working relationship.

- Ask questions like "How are things going?" rather than "What are you working on?" or "What is the status of this project?" By asking questions about the person, instead of work-related questions, you will communicate a sense of caring.

- Pay special attention to your colleagues' needs for emotional support and encouragement. By being a trusted colleague, you will be able to gain trust and support from others.

Stress Management Strategies

Stress Tolerance

- In order to decrease your levels of stress, it is important to focus on things which you have control (e.g., your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors) over. Do not be overly concerned with things that are outside of your control. When people believe they are in control, they feel balanced and capable of positive emotions. When people feel out of control, they experience anxiety, doubt, and fear.

- Use stress management strategies to decrease levels of stress. These strategies include setting new priorities when circumstances change, setting appropriate boundaries with coworkers and work teams, and seeking counsel/support from trusted colleagues.

- Use proper stress reduction techniques to calm your body. These techniques include progressive relaxation, taking deep breaths, or taking body breaks.

- See if it would be useful to build rest times into your schedule. Often, having a place to relax at work (i.e., outside of your office or workspace) for brief periods can help you to refocus and reenergize.

- What resources do you have at your disposal to help when challenges arise? List people, physical resources and approaches that you can leverage in order to decrease levels of stress.

- Setting unrealistic goals and having unrealistic expectations generally increases stress. Remember to set goals that are specific, realistic, measurable, and attainable. It is also important to write out a timeframe for you to obtain your goals.

Impulse Control

- Conduct a self-inventory on controlling your impulses. Have there been times when you have made rash decisions because you were overwhelmed by emotions or were biased by them? If so, look to see if there are any patterns to your impulsive decisions.

- Do you have a tendency to jump into action mode rather than taking time to plan or conceptualize? Projects and assignments often have to be started over from scratch because of poor impulse control. Remember to give adequate time at the beginning of a project, rather than struggle to put out fires during the execution stage.

- Formal documentation of the pros and cons of alternative actions will help avoid rash decisions. With each proposal, ask yourself, what is the best-case scenario with implementation and what is the worst-case scenario with implementation?

- Whenever possible, use a multi-step strategy; proposed solution, verification of solution (e.g., pilot testing, second opinions), and only then, implementation.

- Whenever you are in a position to act impulsively – stop, take a deep breath, and think. This will give you extra time to think about alternative actions.

Adaptability Strategies

Reality Testing

- Do a Reality Testing self-inventory. Have there been times when you have misread important information? If so, look to see if there are any patterns to your misguided thinking. When solving problems, do you think factually or do you allow emotions to cloud your judgment? Are there times when making a decision that you were overly positive or negative? If so, what were the outcomes?

- Increase focus on practical actions when making decisions. Ideals are desirable, but not always feasible. Ensure that your perspective is validated by alternate sources of information and by other individuals before finalizing the decision.

- In order to improve your decision-making skills, ask trusted colleagues to discuss with you how you work through problems when under stress. This will help you to gain insight into how your mood and levels of strain can impact your subjective evaluations of situations. If you did not react to situations appropriately, ask your colleagues in what areas you could improve.

- It is extremely important to define your problem before starting the problem-solving process. Understanding the problem and where it came from is a necessary step before generating different solutions. Gathering and discussing relevant information based on facts will have a positive impact on decision-making outcomes.

- Conducting a SWOT analysis can be a useful tool to improving your Reality Testing. Being able to identify a situation's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats will help to identify internal and external supports for your change (strengths and opportunities) as well as internal and external challenges to the change (weaknesses and threats).

Flexibility

- Brainstorming is key to improving your Flexibility skills. Brainstorming, preferably in a group context (e.g., with direct reports, peers, and managers), will allow you to harvest new ideas for changing situations. This technique will enable you to take on different perspectives when trying to solve problems.

- If you have difficulty with change, write down what emotions accompany your thoughts of incorporating change. When looking through your list, ensure that your emotional reactions to the change are realistic. You can find out if your reactions are realistic by consulting alternate sources of information or by talking to other individuals.

- One of the reasons people have trouble with Flexibility is that their irrational beliefs get in the way. People often believe that they cannot operate outside of their comfort zones. Reframing your beliefs can improve your self-confidence and your ability to take on new challenges. Consider how successful past experiences are applicable to new challenges.

- Solicit the opinions of trusted coworkers and genuinely listen to their views on a particular problem and how they would approach it. In the end, you can incorporate their insights and opinions as you see fit into your own solution formulation.

Problem Solving

- For complex issues, generate multiple alternatives and evaluate them on the basis of relevance, impact, costs, resources, and timing. By using these dimensions or criteria, you can ascertain which course of action makes the most sense.

- Ask trusted colleagues to evaluate your problem-solving approach. Not only will this help your understanding of others' mindsets, but you will also learn new approaches that you can apply to future challenges.

- Articulate a course of action when problem solving. An action plan specifically outlines the activities that need to be done, at various points in time, in order to successfully problem solve.

- Understanding what the problem is, when it started, and where it came from are necessary steps to consider when going through the problem-solving process. Asking relevant questions that accurately identify the problem will serve as the basis for constructing relevant solutions.

General Mood Strategies

Optimism

- Choose to view setbacks as temporary rather than permanent. Recognize that things need to be improved and create an action plan in order to obtain improved results. Do not ruminate or repeat negative thoughts.

- When faced with a difficult situation, avoid dwelling on negative past experiences. Determine the cause of the problem, take corrective action and move forward. Focus on positive outcomes for future behavior.

- When the chips are down and things are not going well, go to your emotional memory bank account. Draw upon the times when you successfully solved a challenging problem or dealt with a difficult coworker.

- Before tackling a difficult assignment, imagine yourself successfully completing it. For example, picture yourself successfully interacting with clients and colleagues and feeling as if you are helping the company build towards its success.

- Adjust goals to make them attainable. This does not mean making goals that are too easy. Original goal setting practices may have created goals that are unrealistic. Be solution-focused instead of problem-focused.

Happiness

- Take an active role in celebrating individual and organizational achievements. Successfully meeting challenges and overcoming them requires recognition. Build in time to reward yourself and your team.

- Determine activities that are enjoyable, and if possible, spend more time doing these activities.

- Invest time into planning for these enjoyable activities. Just as you would write down business activities into your day planner, write down extracurricular activities as well. Plan for them!

- Smile. Yes, it is just that simple. You will appear more approachable, and make a better impression on others. Coworkers like spending time around happy people.

- Ask trusted coworkers to indicate the times when you may not have been presenting with a happy disposition. Examine to see if a pattern exists in regard to these past experiences and reflect to understand if it was possible to have changed your mood during these circumstances.